

GRANTEE MONITORING

Grantee Name	Caring Pregnancy Center dba Options Pregnancy Center
Location/Address	322 E. Blue Earth Ave. Fairmont, MN 56031
Date and Location of Site Visit	June 22, 2017 322 E. Blue Earth Ave., Fairmont, MN
Grantee Participants	Bob Charnecki
MDH Participant(s)	Mary Ottman, Grant Manager
Grant Agreement #/PO #	109492

PURPOSE:

In accordance with the MDH Policy 238.01 Grantee Monitoring, MDH will conduct at least one monitoring visit per grant period on all state grants of over \$50,000, and at least annual monitoring visits on grants of over \$250,000.

The purpose of the grant monitoring visit is to review and ensure progress against the grants' goals, to address any problems or issues before the end of the grant period and to build rapport between the state agency and the grantees. This visit may cover topics such as statutory compliance; challenges faced by the grantee, modifications made to the grant program, program outcomes, grantee policies and procedures, grantee governance, and training and technical assistance needs.

The findings or information obtained through this monitoring activity will be used:

- To ascertain how MDH program funds are being utilized
- To provide targeted technical assistance needs
- To improve program implementation performance
- To suggest other training needs
- In future funding decisions

OVERVIEW

1. Is the Grantee's non-profit 501(c) 3 status current?

Yes, IRS determination letter issued in April 1985; verified in IRS letter dated August 14, 2013.

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2. Does the Grantee have a central file containing the official records for this grant agreement and/or amendment?

Yes

3. Where is this central file located?

Director's office, 322 E. Blue Earth Ave., Fairmont, MN

4. Who is responsible for this central file?

Executive Director

5. Does the central file include

- The grant proposal? Yes
- The award letter? Yes
- The signed grant agreement and any/all amendments? Yes
- Any/all requests and/or approvals for scope/budget changes? Yes
- The work plan? Yes
- Any/all payment requests (invoices)? Yes
- Any/all signed subcontracts? Not applicable (no subcontracts)
- Any/all Progress Reports? Yes

CONTRACTUAL

1. Does the Grantee have written policies or procedures addressing use of contractors and/or subcontractors?

NA – not using subcontractors.

2. Were any sub-contractors paid from the MDH grant required to sign a contractual agreement outlining services to be rendered, duration of engagement, and pay rate?

NA

3. Was the contractual agreement(s) reviewed and approved by MDH before implementation?

NA

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PERSONNEL POLICIES, PROCEDURES AND PRACTICES OF THE GRANTEE

1. Are time distribution records (e.g., time-sheets) maintained to show how employees who are funded through, or contributed in kind to, the MDH grant and who work on multiple projects/programs spend their time?

Yes

2. Do personnel and/or payroll records show dates of hire/termination, immigration status if applicable, actual hours of time worked, leave time, federal and state programs worked on, and earning for all employees who are funded through, or contributed in kind, to the MDH grant?

Yes

3. Does the Grantee have policies and procedures in writing regarding:

- Payroll? Yes
- Travel? Yes
- Overtime? Yes
- Timesheets? Yes
- Taxes? Yes
- Purchasing? Yes
- Compensated time off? Yes

4. Are employees time sheets approved?

Yes

By whom (what position)?

Executive Director and signed off by staff

By the Executive Director?

Yes

5. Does the Grantee's payroll preparation and distribution involve more than one employee?

Timesheets approved by the Director, checks prepared by CPA, signed by Board Chairman or Treasurer

6. Does an authorized official approve all checks before being signed?

Yes

Additional Comments:

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PROGRAMMATIC QUESTIONS

Please use this space to answer all questions.

Program History

- When was your program started? Why was it started? Caring Pregnancy Center was started in 1984 in response to community members recognizing a need for supportive services for pregnant teens/women who were choosing to carry their pregnancies to term. Caring Pregnancy Center expanded our services to women with pregnancy related concerns with the addition of a Positive Alternatives Grant in 2006.
- What need does your program fulfill? Caring Pregnancy Center (Options Pregnancy Center) provides consultation about alternatives to abortion, pregnancy and parenting education, material assistance for pregnant women and infants, life skills education, and community referrals for a wide range of services.
- How has the program grown or changed since its beginning? Options Pregnancy Center has become more focused on providing information and education about pregnancy and parenting while still meeting the material needs of our clients.

Grantee's Target population

- Who does the organization primarily serve? We serve any women and/or her partner with pregnancy related needs.
- What is the program's demographic and geographic coverage? Options Pregnancy Center primarily serves Martin, Faribault, Watonwan and part of Jackson Counties in southern Minnesota.
- Review recent Demographic reporting. 46% ages 20-24, 18% married, 94% Caucasian (consistent with the community), 26% Hispanic (higher than county demographics).

Leadership and Governance

- Effective Board: How many board members currently serve, who are they? Currently we have 10 board members: 3 nurses (1 retired), a doctor, a banker, an agri-businessman, a teacher, social worker; one board member who has adopted a child, one board member who was an adopted child, one post-abortive member, one former client/teen pregnancy; 7 women and 3 men; residents of several communities in our service area.
- How often do they meet? How are they informed of organization's progress and challenges? The board meets monthly and is updated at each board meeting about the progress of the Center and is kept informed of any challenges between meetings by email.

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- How supportive is the Board of the program? We have a very supportive and engaged board. Board members have been attending national conferences and bringing ideas for growth and expansion. Currently the board is exploring adding STI testing services to our current services and considering satellite offices in two neighboring communities.
- How is the program staffed? Who is responsible for the supervision of grant staff? Currently we have 3 part time grant staff. Two are supervised by our Client Services Director and the staff person involved with the Work Readiness Program is supervised by the Executive Director
 - How are staff evaluated on their performance? How long have PA staff been employed there? Two of the PA staff have been employed for 2 years or more, one hired April of this year. New employees are evaluated by their supervisor at 3 month and 6 month intervals. After the first year, each employee is evaluated in July by their direct supervisor and the Executive Director.
 - How are staff background checks done? Generally we rely on references and previous work history. We believe in giving employees a chance as long as there is nothing that could be harmful to a client.
 - What is your organization's policy on complaints for staff and clients? Staff have a grievance policy and procedure to follow. Client complaints are brought to the Director and a meeting is set up with the staff to try to resolve the complaint.

Budget

- Does the current budget reflect your work plan activities? Yes
- Is the budget accurate for the project size/scope? Yes
- Do you have any challenges with the budget or invoicing? No
- Has your Financial Reconciliation taken place? No
- If you have an elevated risk designation, and/ or your Financial Reconciliation report cited any concerns, these will be discussed. Options Pregnancy Center is a low risk grantee and has been in compliance with all due diligence requirements.

Review Work Plan including:

Partners

- If applicable: how are people referred to the program? Are there any barriers encountered with referral sources? What is your most common referral source? Most clients are referred by family and friends. After 33 years of serving the community we frequently see second generation clients. Some clients are referred by area schools, medical clinics and churches.

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- Challenges with partners or specific counties? Healthy Families program has been serving many of the same clients, plus a program for pregnant teens/young women at the Workforce Center is also serving some of the same clients. Sometimes it seems the programs are hesitant to work together. Concern about client numbers?

Work Plan

- Review your 2016 – 19 grant application's description of the program you are asking to be funded. On your work plan note the services and activities you said you would provide and the number of clients you would serve.
- **Prepare a short summary of your current program(s) and the number of clients being served.** How does what you describe in the application compare with what you are currently providing? Have any programs and/or activities or services been added or removed? Have the number of clients being served per quarter decreased or increased since June 2016? Is there anything in particular you want to share about your current program to explain its current status? (Attached)

Options Pregnancy Center 2017

Options Pregnancy Center's grant application was submitted to enhance several of the services provided at our center. Each of these services is still being provided, some with a few modifications.

A portion of the grant is to fund a second part-time Client Advocate position at Options Pregnancy Center. We were unable to fill the second position for several months as we searched for an appropriate candidate in an area of the state with a labor shortage. We finally filled the position and were able to accelerate her training so that we can bring all programs up to capacity. We initially anticipated our Client Advocates serving 18 clients per quarter. We have been averaging more than double that number.

A part of the grant request was for expanded service hours. Our center is currently open 4 days per week. With the addition of a second part-time Client Advocate we planned to open 5 days per week. Now that our staff is complete and training is almost completed we are making plans to expand hours in July 2017.

A Work Readiness Project was also part of our original grant application. This program was designed to give our clients some hands on work experience and coaching on proper work place behaviors using our thrift store as a work station and a part time grant staff person along with our regular staff and volunteers as mentors. We initially anticipated 8 clients per quarter. The program has had some fluctuation in client numbers mostly due to changes in our local economy and a very low unemployment rate. Some months we have not met our anticipated participation rate, other months far exceeded it.

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We began using some temporary paid positions to further assist our clients in meeting their desire for self-sufficiency. This has been well received by our clients, but we are not certain we are seeing the results we hoped for. Most successfully complete a short term work experience, but remain unemployed when the temporary position is completed. We intend to continue this part of the program for another year, try to make adjustments as needed, and reevaluate continuing this portion of the program next year.

Our Sleep Safely Baby Crib Program – providing our clients with a new crib for attending 6 hours of pregnancy/infant care/parenting information - has been a success from the beginning. This has been well received and supported in the community and by our clients. Our original estimate was to serve 40 clients per year and we expect to be very close to that number.

Outreach has been a little challenging for us this past year. We had hoped to have several new billboards, but were not able to reach an agreement on installing the signs. One area that had been successful had been advertising on local transit buses. The company changed ownership last summer and removed all advertising. We also hoped to see some improvement in transportation options for our clients with the expanded bus service, but the bus service has continued to struggle and has not become the benefit to our clients as anticipated.

With transportation remaining an issue for many of our clients, we are exploring the possibility of satellite centers in both Blue Earth and St. James. Using existing staff and volunteers we hope to have each satellite office open 2 days per week offering all the services currently available in our main center – possibly including STI testing.

- Do you anticipate making any changes to the 2017-18 Work Plan? If so, in what way and for what reasons? We may make some minor changes in outreach as certain advertising opportunities are no longer available; plus the potential for expansion into new communities may require redirecting some outreach resources. We may also increase hours for Client Advocates as we consider part time staffing for satellite offices. Funds for increased staff hours will come partially from the supplies budget, specifically from baby cribs; relying more on pack –n-plays and local fundraising for additional cribs.

Participants:

- What type of outreach does the organization put into action? What is working well? What are more the challenging aspects to finding or retaining clients? Currently we are advertising in school sports programs and local newspapers plus distributing posters and brochures to area schools, social service organizations and churches. We will be represented at the county fair and have been represented at several

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other community events. We do have a website which is in need up updating and are seeking a volunteer or staff to start outreach through social media. A resource we had used in the past with considerable success was advertising on local transit buses. Changes in the bus service eliminated all bus advertising. Probably the biggest challenge in finding new clients is our long term status in the community. Potential clients know we do not perform or refer for abortion. If their mind is already set, they will not come here (mind's made up, don't confuse me with the facts).

Data:

- How is program data collected and by whom? Is data collected useful to agency?
Data is collected by each Client Advocate and compiled by the data entry volunteer and the director when preparing reports.

Review Evaluation

- Your 2015-16 Evaluation Report Summary will be discussed (If you were a past grantee).
- Your 2016-17 Evaluation Plan will be reviewed. Any suggestions provided in your 2015-16 Report Summary should be included in the plan, if you are continuing a similar evaluation. If you are planning a new evaluation, details will be discussed. Do you have any questions on your evaluation? The current evaluation project topic included encouraging a healthy and nutritious diet. More specifically this will include looking at soda pop consumption and offering the alternative of water.

Miscellaneous

- Anything else you would like to share? Not at this time.

What can we do to help?

- Trainings and Grantee meetings useful for grantee? Any topic suggestions?
- Is there any way MDH can assist you to better equip your success in the Positive Alternatives Grant Program.

Summary:

Options Pregnancy Center (OPC) has been providing Positive Alternatives (PA) funded programming since 2006 and continues to offer compassionate care with positive alternatives to abortion for the rural southern area of Minnesota including their location in Fairmont. Consistently serving a four county area, OPC's client base is largely in the 20 – 24 age group, Caucasian or Hispanic, and typically unmarried. Services and programming have expanded over the thirty-three years of operations and with the aid of the PA funding now include: case management, crib distribution and safe sleep education, employment assistance, life skills

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education, materials support, nutrition, pregnancy and parenting education, pregnancy testing and transportation assistance.

As a long time PA grantee OPC has made good efforts at using the best practices guidelines often recommended for small non-profits. Policies and staff guidelines all seem to be in place for the day-to-day operations of the organization. One suggestion was made regarding the routine use of background checks for staff or volunteers involved with the organization that will be working with either clients or money. Currently background checks are not required or rarely used for new staff or volunteers. Although smaller rural organizations often know their applicants or volunteers through word of mouth or local connections it was recommended that in the future OPC utilize a simple criminal background check for all new staff hired and for all volunteers who plan to work with clients or with the organization's funding. It was pointed out that background checks for staff and volunteers are a best practice policy that all organization's working with vulnerable clients should have in place.

OPC staff and board of directors has also been discussing the possibility of offering satellite services to one or two areas outside the Fairmont area including St. James and Blue Earth. Recently a PA grantee in the St. James/Mountain Lake area has closed its doors after providing local services for a number of years. OPC is actively looking at filling this gap by providing services in this area through an outreach effort beginning one or two days per week. Providing much needed services and programming in the south central area of rural Minnesota would be highly encouraged for there is little pregnancy support and programming for women in need in this expansive rural area. This stretching of services may require minor changes in the budget to add additional staffing hours and in adding programming to the current work plan. Changes will be made when decisions are reached.

Discussion also included the topic of offering STI testing and services. Currently both the staff and board of directors are seriously researching this option. OPC's medical director is very supportive of this idea and has voiced support for the program. Tentative plans are underway for initiating and adding this program.

OPC will expand its services days open each week to five this summer with the addition of a Client Advocate position. Currently the Work Readiness and Training program through the organization's Thrift Store has been experiencing some fluctuations in number of clients to serve and train. Staff and the board of director's are taking a closer look at this program evaluating its successes and challenges to make decisions regarding the future of the program.

OPC continues to operate as a responsible and eager PA grantee. They provide vital services to women in need in a large rural geographical area in southern Minnesota with possible plans to expand their networking to one or two satellite areas in the near future. They maintain a welcoming office space in the heart of the downtown area of Fairmont and are easily recognizable and accessible for clients. It has been a pleasure to work alongside this PA grantee and I look forward to our continuing future partnership.

Date: July 17, 2017

Grant Manager: Mary Ottman

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